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ABSTRACT

The Foster Parent Training Project builds on the desire of foster parents to promote the physical, mental and emotional growth of children in their care. Parents are taught to assist in reducing the impact on the children of separation. Classes deal with emotional development, sexual development, lying, emotional disturbance, the issues at each level of development as well as other aspects of fostering. Supervised meetings among foster parents provide skill practice and enhance their competency in the care of children living with them. A special focus of the program is the alerting of foster parents to the many sources of aid in their communities and State. (Excerpts from the Foster Parent Attitude Survey are included. (BN)

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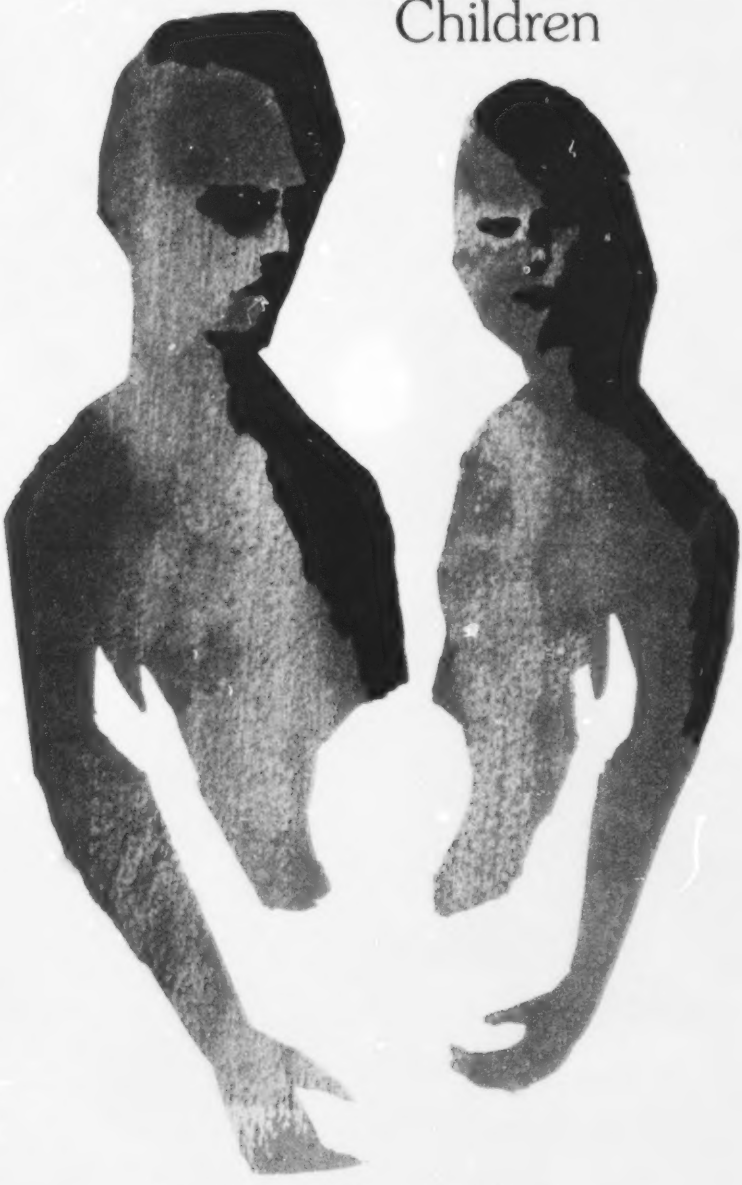
Training Foster Parents to Serve Dependent Children



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FOREWORD

More than 350,000 children in this country currently are being raised in foster families. Although many of these children experience severe emotional, behavioral, and developmental problems—that in some instances may have either led to or resulted from placement—foster parents generally receive no formal training to aid them in coping with and responding to their wards. Lacking necessary expertise or merely being unaware of community resources, well-meaning parents often find themselves unable to provide care to children with special needs—teenagers, battered and abused youngsters, and children who are mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed, or physically handicapped. In recent years, increasing numbers of foster parents have begun privately to seek out others to discuss mutual problems and to attempt to increase their own effectiveness.

The Foster Parent Training Project described in this monograph was designed by Dr. Patricia Ryan, Associate Professor of Sociology at Eastern Michigan University, and supported under a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health. The program recognizes and builds on the desire of foster parents to promote the physical, mental, and emotional growth of the children in their care. Parents are taught to assist in reducing the impact, on the children, of separation from their natural families and in overcoming the obstacles to development of a positive self-image. Classes and supervised meetings among foster parents provide skills and enhance their competency in the care of children living with them. A special focus of the program is to alert foster parents to the many potential sources of aid in their communities and State.

Demand for and attendance at the classes have far surpassed the expectations of the investigator. The program has portrayed clearly the benefits of enlisting natural parents, foster parent associations, child welfare associations, community colleges, and the State human service system in a cooperative effort that focuses on the individual needs of foster parents and children. Clear, too, are the feasibility and the advisability of extending the program to other communities and States.

Foster parent training projects such as this one promise to increase the number of foster families willing to provide care and, more importantly, to open their homes to children with special needs. Moreover, as their increased effectiveness encourages foster parents and families to care for a child for longer periods of time, the child also stands to gain from a reduced number of placements, a greater sense of, and appreciation of, family stability and whole-

ness. We would hope this is a heritage that the children will pass on in the future and that the knowledge and experience documented here will be of help to other individuals, groups, and professions responsible for child development.

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Training Foster Parents To Serve Dependent Children

Foster parents are discussing a crisis in the life of a little girl in their charge—a crisis that also deeply affects their own lives. The girl's natural mother has appeared after 4 years of absence and demanded that she have her daughter with her for Christmas. The social worker directed the foster parents to comply with the mother's request. When the natural mother came to get the little girl, the child, unable to remember her natural mother, was frightened.

Foster Mother: Al, I'm so mad I could scream! Imagine the nerve of that social worker, telling us that Mary would spend Christmas with her mother. She's our baby – that hopeheaded woman isn't fit to touch her!

Foster Father: We've had Mary since she was 1 year old. We're her mommy and daddy and have been for 4 years. Where was her mother then? Remember how dirty, hungry, and scared she was when the social worker brought her to us? That social worker doesn't know what's going on. She's never seen how that woman acts.

The words are not spontaneous. The couple is reading from a script on the table before them. But the actors are real foster parents, and the situation has direct and immediate meaning for them and for the other foster parents who are listening attentively.

When the reading is over, the instructor calls for comments. Most of the foster parents have opinions. The majority are hostile toward the natural mother and the social worker. One man tries to take a broader view: "You have the child all year round and you'll have her back. Why can't you be generous enough to let her go for Christmas?" The others disagree. If the mother loved the child, she wouldn't wait 4 years to visit. If she loved the child, why is the child in foster care?

The foster parents move from comments on the script to real life problems and grievances. One woman is about to lose a child she has had for 1½ years. According to another, the courts will take a child away merely at a natural parent's request. One complains

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that her social worker does not visit often enough; another praises her social worker. All the members of the class have foster children and all have run into problems they would like to discuss.

This is a beginners' class and there is a great deal of ground to cover: The role of the social worker and her relationship to foster parents must be explored. The problems of the natural parents must be understood. The network of involved people—foster parents, natural parents, social workers, agencies—needs to be clarified since, in essence, they are all working toward a common goal of what is best for the child.

The Project

The script is used in a course given as part of Eastern Michigan University's Foster Parent Training Project, which is funded by the National Institute of Mental Health's Center for Studies of Metropolitan Problems. The class is composed of foster parents seeking to improve their skills for the unique job of taking care of other people's children. Part of the class format involves role playing the difficult situations which foster parents frequently experience and discussing how to handle them.

Requests for help from foster parents' associations led to the development of the project by Drs. Patricia Ryan and Bruce L. Warren, both Associate Professors of Sociology at Eastern Michigan University. They designed a program to equip foster parents in various Michigan counties with specialized skills to meet the needs of the children in foster care. According to Dr. Ryan, "If any group of parents is justified in feeling the need for help, foster parents should be first on the list."

Many people love children and are willing to take them into their homes, even at considerable personal expense. It costs the State only a fraction of the cost of institutionalization to keep a child in a foster home. The U.S. Children's Bureau estimates that there is a yearly average of 350,000 children in foster family care homes. As some children move out of foster care, new ones enter. The quality of their experiences while in care depends largely on the foster parents. Dr. Ryan recognized that many of the families caring for foster children were not prepared to handle the children's special needs. She and her staff believe that foster children are the collective responsibility of the entire community, but that the specific needs of children are best met in a family situation.

Ideally, foster parents provide a family, home, and security for these children. Since all of the children have been separated from the only homes they know, they bear scars that other children generally do not. Dr. Ryan says, "Children blame themselves for what happened to them. Why did Mama die? Why did Papa go away? These events are seen as rejections; and the child feels he must have deserved them in some way . . . . It often happens that children seem to get along well in foster care until adolescence when the

situation deteriorates. Foster parents, whose training enables them to handle a child's identity problems, can provide a home in which the child will not feel rejection and in which the normal developmental crisis of adolescence will not cause a secure placement to break down."

The Children

Foster children are under the supervision of welfare agencies, public and private. Unlike orphans, most of these children cannot be offered for adoption (and thus given permanent homes) because their natural parents are still living and will not agree to release them. Society often helps families in crisis stay together, but it is reluctant to terminate the rights of natural parents to their children if there is any possibility the family may eventually be able to provide a suitable home for them. Many foster children remain in a kind of limbo of temporary care, with little hope of a reasonably quick solution.

About one-fourth of the national population of children living outside their families are in institutions and group homes. The rest live in foster homes. By definition, foster care is a temporary arrangement. But it may go on year after year—for some children home after home—until the children are grown. Dr. Ryan is opposed to this: "Something must be done definitely, and early enough, to give the child a permanent home before the damage to his feelings of identity and trust takes place."

The Trauma of Separation

All children removed from their parents, even infants, experience separation trauma, although it may be manifested differently depending on the child's age and situation. Thus, children come to foster parents traumatized in ways that natural parents seldom see. If the children have moved from home to home, their traumatization may be compounded. Some children, after being continuously hurt, deliberately bring on further rejection by creating situations in a new foster home.

What these traumatized children need and are entitled to is a stable home. If the natural parents cannot provide it, adoption would be the ideal alternative. But law and custom make adoption difficult, even when the natural parents consent to such an action. When the natural parents are opposed to termination of their rights to the child, it may take many years from the time action is taken until the child is freed for adoption—and this time is a crucial period of the child's life.

In order to help the foster parents realize what the child is feeling, Dr. Ryan asks the foster parents to remember how it felt when they lost someone. Then, in order to better understand a child's behavior, foster parents are taught the various stages of separation

trauma the child goes through. It is a form of mourning with several stages: First, the child protests and denies: "How could it happen? There must be some mistake!" This is followed by shock and numbness. Then there is tremendous anger. The child lashes out and, in effect, cries "Why me?" The child blames the parent for dying or the doctor who said the parent was ill. At this stage, the foster parent may easily misunderstand what is happening. When the anger lets up, the child often sinks into despair. Finally, the child begins to accept the situation.

In addition to recognizing these stages, foster parents are helped to develop techniques with which to handle each phase. They are then able to help the children come to grips with their feelings about themselves and about their natural parents. The classes also teach the foster parents how to cope with the ambivalence that children develop as they become attached to the foster family and help to prepare the foster parents for their own feelings of separation when the child moves.

Foster Parenting

Parenting is not instinctual. Regardless of the experience foster parents have had with their own children, they often find fostering very different. Few have had formal training in child growth and development. According to the project newsletter, "Foster parenting is parenting-plus." Fostering may involve handling many children of many different ages at one time. (Michigan law allows foster parents to take up to four foster children at a time if they have no more than four of their own.) Foster parents may have children further apart or closer together in age than most families. The children arrive at times of crisis or under extraordinary circumstances. For example, Dr. Ryan tells of a foster family who was called at 2 a.m. and asked if they could take six children at 2:30 a.m. until some other provision could be made.

Foster parents also have special pressures that normal parents do not have. They are under ongoing supervision. They have legal obligations to the agency, the natural parents, and the children. Although foster parents are reimbursed by State or local governments for some of the expenses involved, few receive full reimbursement for what they spend on the children. Michigan's reimbursement allowance is only 80 percent of what Federal guidelines estimate to be the amount required for expenses of a child on a moderate scale.

Dr. Ryan feels strongly that foster parenting is a job (like any other job) that requires training and formal status requirements. She says, "Foster families shouldn't be considered 'problem families' under agency supervision. Foster parents are really agency staff, providing a service as important as that provided by most professionals who deal with children. . . . For more effective service to the child, foster parents should be included in present and future

planning. . . foster parent training should be viewed as in-service training."

Consequently, the Foster Parent Training Project not only offers single courses but also awards a specialized Foster Parent Certificate after completion of four courses or 80 hours of instruction.

In planning the Project, Dr. Ryan also took into consideration that foster parents, with jobs and with children to raise, need to be practical people; they must believe that the time in class is well spent. Therefore, class content must specifically address the problems these parents encounter; classes should be conveniently located so as not to waste travel time and be flexible enough to allow for family disruptions; and the Project should offer some reimbursement for babysitting and travel.

The Michigan Department of Social Services, in recognition of the value of such training, pays the tuition for foster parents supervised by their county agencies, plus $4 to each trainee for each session attended to defray transportation and babysitting costs. Some of the county juvenile courts and private agencies do the same for foster parents under their jurisdiction. Additional support comes from scholarships offered to foster parents by a few of the community colleges.

Curriculum and Courses

During the first year, courses were offered for 2½ hours once a week, in 6-week sessions. Course schedules and sites were designed for maximum convenience of the foster parents, and class size was kept small, about 20–25 per class, in order to maintain a personal atmosphere. Instructors were carefully selected on the basis of their professional qualifications and their personal ability to work with foster parents; they were then given curriculum materials, course outlines, evaluation guides, and an intensive training program.

The trainees, most of whom had experience raising children and foster children, helped to determine class content and emphasis, either by request or by their responses to a questionnaire[1] administered before the classes started, or by trial and error while the classes proceeded. Feedback was encouraged and used to modify course content as the year progressed. "They may lack theoretical knowledge," says Dr. Ryan, "but they bring a lot of commonsense, experience, and concern to their jobs."

The first eight courses offered by the training program dealt with:

Child development at all ages, both for ordinary children and for children with exaggerated behavior indicating emotional problems

Conditions and situations that lead to the placement of children in foster care, and what they mean in terms of future behavior and adjustment

The role of foster parents and the function of the agency in helping children

[1] Excerpts in Appendix.

The consequences of separation trauma

How foster parents influence the child's behavior, both for short-term management and long-term growth

Specific needs of children with special problems: retardation, emotional and physical disabilities, problems of adolescence and minority status; what to expect from such children; how to handle and care for them

How foster parents meet problems in dealing with schools for ordinary foster children as well as those with special problems

Community resources available to the parents

These courses were then altered, expanded, and modified as information and demand increased. By the spring of 1977, 20 courses had been developed:

Issues in Fostering [2]

The Three Families of the Foster Child and Their Role in His Emotional Development

Fostering Infants

Fostering the Pre-School Child

Fostering the School-Age Child

Fostering the Teenager

Guiding the Sexual Development of the Foster Child

Fostering the Mentally Retarded Child (I & II)

Fostering the Physically Handicapped Child

Handling Lying, Dishonesty, and Destructive Behavior [2]

Fostering the Child With Emotional Disturbance (I & II)

Fostering the Battered and Abused Child

Communicating With the Professional

Working With Natural Families

All Under One Roof

Human Developmental Stages

Legal Aspects of Fostering

Planning and Assessing for Your Foster Child

When foster parents expressed difficulty understanding and relating to the natural parents, the social worker, or the foster child, content and material were again modified to meet these concerns. Foster parents learned that:

The world as they know it is not necessarily the one which the child perceives. In order to help the child, they must learn something about his world. For instance, what are the "Three Families of the Foster Child?" The first is his natural family. The second is the foster family with which the child lives. The third is the child's fantasy. The fantasy family may start as a make-believe family but, as time passes, the child comes to believe in the reality of this family. They may even tell their classmates about this family so they will not be considered different. The fantasy family is a glamorization of the natural family: The father who has stopped drinking and will soon bring the family together again in a new house; the mother who sends many presents and will soon come for

[2] Course outline appears in Appendix.

the child. Without knowledge of the child's fantasy family, foster parents may fail to understand what lies behind the child's behavior and make wrong judgments or otherwise respond inappropriately. What appears to be simple lying may sometimes be better understood as confusion about how it actually is and how we would like it to be.

Some foster children have problems that require special care and understanding—physical handicaps, mental retardation, emotional disturbances, and adolescent crises. Special courses train foster parents to work with these children as an alternative to institutional placements. Foster families learn how to work with these children and learn about community resources available to such children. They learn how to assess the child's needs, the child's progress, and how to develop plans to help them grow and develop. They learn how to work cooperatively with other professionals to assure that the child has the best possible care.

Behavior Problems

To understand a child's behavior does not necessarily mean to accept or condone it. While the classes try to shift the emphasis away from rigid codes, they also teach foster parents how to handle behavior that hurts the child, hurts others, is illegal, or causes trouble. As Dr. Ryan states, "A child can't be allowed to throw himself downstairs repeatedly. He or she can't be allowed to swallow a whole bottle of aspirin. We can't let one child attack another with a hammer. Our trainees have had children who did all these things."

Destructive behaviors are distinguished from the cautionary ("yellow light") or the permissible ("green light") behaviors and are accordingly called "red light behaviors." If the foster parents cannot control these behaviors, they must get outside help.

But all behavior must be evaluated in context. For instance, should a child's calling some other child dirty names always be under absolute prohibition? Says Dr. Ryan, "Although verbal abuse is not to be condoned, it may be an improvement over the child's former practice of physically attacking others. Thus the foster parents can focus on teaching the child more appropriate ways of handling anger. Another possibility is that a child may have been exposed to such language in his natural family and may not understand that these words are offensive to others."

One of the most popular courses is "Handling Lying, Dishonesty, and Destructive Behavior." A close examination of this class exemplifies the project's approach to other courses. The foster parents learn to ask, "Why might a child behave like this? Why does this behavior upset me so much? How might I be contributing to the child's behavior? How might I teach the child more appropriate ways to behave?"

The parents are asked to list the reasons they think a child might lie. Are there any reasons why foster children might be more apt to lie than other children? What about wish-fulfillment? Could some of them have learned to lie in order to make their way in an unusually difficult world? What about the lag in development that might occur in children who are under pressure?

What about stealing? Are foster children more likely to steal? Could stealing objects be a substitute for other needs that are not fulfilled? Could children who own so little have different ideas of property rights? The foster parents explore their own values and attitudes with the aid of questions such as: "Your foster child finds an expensive toy car in the school hall. He brings it home. Permissible? Not permissible?"

The foster parents must discover whether their attitudes and standards are consistent—do they apply equally stern standards to themselves? "You find an expensive watch in the elevator at work. You take it home, but don't wear it at work. Permissible for me? Not permissible for me? Community would disapprove?"

Toward the end of the course manual there is a skit about lying and stealing. It casts two foster parents with two children of their own (J, a boy, and K, a girl) and two foster children (A and B, both boys). A is 15, bright, talkative, likeable, and eager to please; but this foster home is his fifth. B is younger and more docile; this is his fourth foster home.

Someone has been taking family possessions, and the father decides that the time has come for a family talk. A responds brightly that in his other foster homes people used to steal a good deal from him because his natural mother, a famous opera singer, would come in for whirlwind visits and give him wonderful gifts from all over. He explains why he has no pictures of his parents—they too were stolen.

K likes A, but, becoming irritated, says that A has been telling similar stories at school, and it has become embarrassing. The father reprimands K, but he also reminds A gently that he has spoken to the social worker about the mother and knows the truth. A becomes quiet. They go to the living room to continue the discussion. The wood for the fireplace is low, and B, who is normally quiet, suddenly volunteers to get the wood from the garage, insisting that he will do it alone. Curious, the father follows him and finds a paper bag with the missing articles in it.

The boy at first denies stealing; then he asks if the foster parents are going to send him away. "That's what they always do . . . send me away." The boy begs him not to tell the others. But the foster father insists that families cannot hide things from one another, even unpleasant things. They do not hate him; they will not send him away. Nothing serious need happen. But they are hurt, and they do hate stealing. "We will have to do some very serious talking."

The foster parent has been gentle and reassuring. But he has let the boys know that lying and stealing are not acceptable. In a warm, secure home perhaps such behavior won't be necessary. When children lie or steal, they are trying to say something, and foster parents should be prepared to hear the message they are sending.

"What we are trying to say to the foster parents is that many of these children have had a rotten break, but you can still help the child have a good growth experience." But, Dr. Ryan insists, the foster parents must really listen to the child, to hear what he or she is trying to say, whether with words or actions. "When a child asks why the natural mother doesn't visit, he may really be asking, 'Does Mama really love me?' Foster parents shouldn't raise false hopes, but neither do they have to belittle the natural parents."

Growth and Development of the Project

The first training site was set up at the Center for the Handicapped, run by the City of Detroit Department of Parks and Recreation, where a chapter of the Foster Parent Association was already holding regular meetings. The location was advantageous since it was convenient for the majority of potential trainees on the east side of Detroit.

Lists of foster parents licensed by the Wayne County Department of Social Services were obtained. Questionnaires were sent out. Those in the eight zip-code areas closest to the site were sent invitations to attend the first class. Although foster parent participation is voluntary, a pattern developed that was to be repeated with each expansion of the program: The response—testifying to the extent of the need—was greater than anticipated. Instead of the single class that had been planned, two classes were started on November 6, 1974. Thirty-six students with a broad range of backgrounds enrolled: The mean age was 50 years, the mean educational attainment was 11.4 years, and 90 percent were black.

Discussions with both parents and workers made it clear that the parents were primarily concerned with two major areas: How to parent the children and how to handle—or work most effectively with—the agencies. The first two classes concentrated on these areas.

When this first group of trainees was questioned about what they thought of the training after completing the introductory courses, a majority found the classes "very interesting." Only 3 percent responded "not very interesting," while 87 percent felt that they could do "a much better job" as foster parents as a result of the training. Nevertheless, 25 percent said they would not take the classes next term because of the pressures under which they operated.

However, when invitations were sent out again to westside Wayne County parents for introductory classes to be held at the St. James United Church of Christ at Dearborn, more people ap-

plied than had been expected. Instead of the two classes scheduled, three were started in January 1975.

It was decided very early to keep the presentation of the material flexible by developing modules—two classes together—that could be combined into any arrangement that might seem most beneficial for a particular group at a particular time and for an instructor with a particular style. The instructor was to lead, never to dominate. There was to be little reliance on lectures. The foster parents would learn from one another, or together, with the instructor acting as a resource person, moderator, or group leader.

Drs. Ryan and Warren consider it vital that the instructor develop class procedures which enable foster parents to feel comfortably open with one another. To accomplish this, the first session of each course includes what is called "unfolding." Each person, starting with the instructor, introduces himself, then gives personal information and relates personal experiences that might have special meaning for other foster parents. An instructor who was a foster child, or is a foster parent, can strike an immediately responsive chord.

New courses were developed to be used for workshops at the Third and Fourth Annual Foster Parent Education Conference in 1975 and 1976. The project staff was invited by the Michigan Foster Parent Association to participate. The conference workshops turned out to be especially valuable as both a source of new ideas and as a testing ground. They allowed identification of new professionals who could be recruited and trained for the program and were a mechanism for disseminating project information to a statewide audience. Thus, the workshops contributed importantly to the development of new courses and sites.

During the spring of 1975, new and more accessible sites were chosen for Wayne County, and one site was established in adjoining Washtenaw County, even though there is no foster parent association there. In the fall of 1975, two sites were added in Genessee County. The project has continued to grow, adding new material and offering classes over a wider geographical area. Funds from the State of Michigan Department of Education, under Title I of the Higher Education Act, allowed expansion into 15 additional counties in southern Michigan.

By the end of 1977, classes were being offered in 24 counties in cooperation with Michigan's community colleges. This is viewed as the beginning of a statewide program to provide foster parent training to all of the foster parents in Michigan. By December 1977, it is expected that 1,500 foster parents will have received over 12,000 hours of instruction from over 70 instructors. More than 150 foster parents will have earned their specialized Foster Parent Certificate.

Presently, two half-time field coordinators locate future training sites and potential instructors. They also meet with agencies and foster parent associations to discuss proposed classes and obtain

information about specific needs in each location. For instance, they recently had to cancel classes in three of the more rural counties when they started too late in the spring and interfered with the planting season. They also ascertained that daytime classes were unpopular in rural and small metropolitan areas, and rescheduled them for evening.

The Foster Parent Training Project has an Advisory Board, composed of foster parents from each of the areas served, which meets bimonthly at Eastern Michigan University to review new programs and make suggestions concerning future policy decisions. The project also publishes a newsletter, *Fostering Ideas*, to keep foster parents informed of new occurrences. Several workbooks, course outlines, and manuals have been completed; these materials are distributed in draft form to encourage constructive criticism from users in order to reshape them into more effective materials. As time allows, staff members are available to discuss the materials with interested groups or to lead workshops on selected topics.

As Dr. Warren, the Associate Director, says: "The program has demonstrated that an extensive curriculum can be presented over a wide geographical area . . . when cooperation and coordination exist among a university, several community colleges, numerous public and private child welfare agencies, and foster parent associations."

Plans for 1977-78 include continued expansion of the project, with the eventual goal of bringing classes within the reach of every foster parent in Michigan, thereby affecting the lives of many thousands of foster children in the State.

By July 1978, the project expects to have reached its goals:

- A self-supporting training program available to all foster parents in Michigan throughout the academic year
- Establishment of a Professional Foster Parent Certificate recognized by child welfare agencies
- A detailed description of the procedures leading to certification as a Professional Foster Parent
- A detailed evaluation of the program for use by agencies in other States
- Training materials and guides such as workbooks, readers, and other aids for use in foster parent training projects
- Dissemination of curriculums, bibliographies, techniques, and other materials through conferences, workshops, newsletters, speeches, and journal articles
- Special training for foster parents of physically and mentally handicapped children that would equip them to perform as full-fledged members of agency teams dealing with the problems of such children

It is expected that once the statewide program is operating, the project will be supported by State and agency funds. At that time

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the Foster Parent Training Project of Eastern Michigan University and its directors believe that their main function will be to provide resources, coordination, and guidance. Financial resources will be needed to provide six statewide coordinators to ensure that things continue to run smoothly and to maintain standards.

The Foster Parent Training Project demonstrates the feasibility of providing comprehensive training and support for foster parents. Eventually, it is hoped, the project will serve as a model for the training of foster parents on a nationwide basis.

Appendix

The survey form that is used to identify areas around which classes are developed is too long to include in its entirety. Short excerpts of sections illustrate the types of information sought.

Two course outlines used by project instructors in training foster parents are included to show how fostering skills are promoted.

FOSTER PARENT ATTITUDE SURVEY

Please read the following questions and put a checkmark next to the answer that comes closest to expressing your feelings. This is not a test but we will find it helpful to know how the people in the class feel about foster parenting and the areas in which they would like more information.

Foster care is necessary because the natural parent is totally inadequate to care for the child.
____ Always true ____ Usually true ____ Almost never true

Maintaining contact between the foster child and his natural family assists the child in knowing himself.
____ Always true ____ Usually true ____ Almost never true

Most foster children should not return to their own homes.
____ Always true ____ Usually true ____ Almost never true

Developing self-worth in the foster child is the single most important task of the foster parents.
____ Always true ____ Usually true ____ Almost never true

A foster child's misbehavior is an indication that he doesn't like his foster family.
____ Always true ____ Usually true ____ Almost never true

There is no good excuse for a child's breaking things in anger.
____ Strongly agree ____ Agree ____ Disagree ____ Strongly disagree

Children who take part in sex play become sex criminals when they grow up.
____ Strongly agree ____ Agree ____ Disagree ____ Strongly disagree

There is no reason parents should have their own way all the time, any more than that children should have their own way all the time.
____ Strongly agree ____ Agree ____ Disagree ____ Strongly disagree

Adopting a foster child allows everyone to forget that he once had another family.
____ Strongly agree ____ Agree ____ Disagree ____ Strongly disagree

Once a child starts on drugs, there is no hope for him.
____ Strongly agree ____ Agree ____ Disagree ____ Strongly disagree

Foster children have to learn that they cannot have the same amount of clothes and toys that the natural children in the family have.
____ Strongly agree ____ Agree ____ Disagree ____ Strongly disagree

A child with a bad background is likely to turn out like his natural parents no matter what anyone does.
____ Strongly agree ____ Agree ____ Disagree ____ Strongly disagree

It is up to the worker or agency to determine if a foster child needs counseling.
____ Strongly agree ____ Agree ____ Disagree ____ Strongly disagree

Childhood stealing is very likely to lead a child into a life of crime.
____ Strongly agree ____ Agree ____ Disagree ____ Strongly disagree

A child should never lie to his foster parents.
____ Strongly agree ____ Agree ____ Disagree ____ Strongly disagree

Unless a child has a physical problem, wetting his bed is a sign of laziness.
____ Strongly agree ____ Agree ____ Disagree ____ Strongly disagree

Foster children should be grateful to the family that cares for them.
___ Strongly agree ___ Agree ___ Disagree ___ Strongly disagree

Foster children who have been sexually abused are a bad influence on the natural children in the family.
___ Strongly agree ___ Agree ___ Disagree ___ Strongly disagree

Running away from a foster home is a sign that the child should not be returned to that home.
___ Strongly agree ___ Agree ___ Disagree ___ Strongly disagree

Foster children usually need more rules than natural children do.
___ Strongly agree ___ Agree ___ Disagree ___ Strongly disagree

Connie's foster parents took her to the doctor when she suddenly became ill. The doctor said her appendix must come out in a day or two. What should the foster parents do?

___ Agree to surgery ___ Call Connie's parents
___ Ask friends for advice ___ Call social worker

After not visiting for a long time, Johnny's mother phoned unexpectedly. She wants to see him today, but the foster mother has made other plans. What should the foster mother do?

___ Call her caseworker about the matter
___ Refuse to allow Johnny's mother to visit
___ Allow Johnny's mother to visit
___ Other: Explain _____

Who do you think should take the most responsibility for handling the foster child in the following areas?

Talking to the teachers when the child is in trouble at school.
___ Social worker? ___ Natural parent?
___ Foster parent? ___ Someone else? Who? _____

Buying clothes for the child.
___ Social worker? ___ Natural parent?
___ Foster parent? ___ Someone else? Who? _____

Deciding which church the child should attend.
___ Social worker? ___ Natural parent?
___ Foster parent? ___ Someone else? Who? _____

We know that children are different but would like you to think of the age at which you can usually expect a child to do certain things.

For instance, at what age would you expect a child:
To be able to sit up by himself? _____
To start walking? _____
To stay dry during the day? _____
To feed himself without too much mess? _____
To stop soiling his pants? _____
To stay dry all night? _____
To play in front of the house or on the block without constant supervision? _____
To cross streets alone? _____
To be able to take a bus by himself? _____
To be able to count to 10? _____

We would like you to think about some of the problems you have as a foster parent. Let's start with the social workers: What are some of the problems you have with them? (Getting to talk with her; getting help from her; bringing or removing children unexpectedly; understanding needs of child, of parent; making unreasonable demands.) _____

_____

_____

In the last year, how many different social workers have you worked with? _____

Would you say that your relationship with most of these workers has been generally very satisfactory, satisfactory, unsatisfactory, or very unsatisfactory? _____

About how many contacts have you had with natural parents in the last 30 days?

____ By phone
____ In your home
____ In the home of the natural parent
____ At the agency office
____ Other

Is it easier to be a foster parent or a natural parent?

____ Foster parent ____ Natural parent

Please explain: _____

_____

What are your own feelings as a foster parent—what upsets you most? (Children misbehaving, letting go of children, sense of failure or too little achieved, not being able to do what is necessary, anger with biological parents.) _____

_____

What are some of the things you do well as a foster parent that make you feel good?

_____

_____

What are some of the areas in which you could improve—things you would like to do better? _____

_____

INTRODUCTION TO THE ROLE OF FOSTER PARENTING AND THE PROBLEMS OF SEPARATION

General Objectives:

1. Introduce, or clarify for the experienced foster parent, the role of the foster parent.
2. To help foster parents (a) understand the meaning of separation of children, (b) understand the behavior problems and other consequences that may develop as a result of separation, (c) develop skills in interpreting the meaning of separation to children so as to reduce the associated trauma of the experience, and (d) develop techniques to help children who are acting out because of separation.

Specific Goals:

Role clarification:

1. To clarify and increase the awareness of foster parents as to the importance of their jobs.
2. To clarify the duties and responsibilities of foster families in providing substitute family care for children.
3. To explore the limitations of the foster parent role in working with foster children.
4. To increase the awareness of foster parents as to the obligations of the agency to the child and his family.
5. To clarify the types of support that the agency and worker are to provide the foster child and the foster family.
6. To explore the obligation of the community to provide services for foster children and the foster family's role in securing these services.

Understanding separation trauma:

1. To develop sensitivity in recognizing and identifying symptoms of separation trauma.
2. To increase the understanding of the types of reactions that children have to separation.
3. To increase skills in reducing the impact of separation.
4. To develop techniques to deal with the behavior of children who are suffering separation.
5. To recognize the role of the natural parents in the child's life.
6. To develop adequate skills in helping the child come to grips with his feelings toward the natural parents.
7. To recognize the ambivalence of the child as he develops feelings of attachment for his foster family.
8. To develop the skills to prepare the child for separation from the foster family.
9. To recognize the ambivalence the foster family feels as they prepare the child to move to another home.

Important points to be emphasized:

1. Foster parenting is a job, providing direct service to children.

2. Foster parents provide more than custodial care; they also provide emotional support, help the child to feel worthwhile, and help him move to the next developmental stage.

3. Foster parents are not natural parents. There are limitations on the decisions they can make for the child.

4. Foster parents must learn to give up foster children. This is done most easily when they recognize what they have given the child.

5. Foster parents work with a lot of children for a short amount of time.

6. Foster parents can hold agency and community accountable.

7. Agency and workers are limited by State law and courts.

8. In most cases, natural parents retain rights to parent the child and in all cases they constitute an important part of his past.

9. Fostering is a total foster family commitment.

10. Foster parents are part of a team that shares information to assure appropriate service to the child.

11. Foster parents are the immediate people to protect the rights of the child in terms of his right to family life, his right to positive feelings about himself and his natural family, his right to expect his affairs to be treated confidentially, and his right to services.

12. All foster children have experienced separation.

13. The five stages of separation are:
    a. shock
    b. protest, denial
    c. anger
    d. despair, depression
    e. detachment or acceptance

14. Many, if not most, foster children blame themselves for the separation.

15. Passive or withdrawn behavior may be as symptomatic of trauma as acting out.

16. Although behavior must sometimes be controlled, reduction of trauma is the long range goal.

17. Foster parents must recognize and work with natural parents for the best interests of the child.

18. Foster parents must remember the child is with them temporarily and will leave them.

19. Part of the duties of foster parents is to prepare the child to leave them.

20. The foster parent should develop a specific plan for helping the child the first day.

21. The child who must choose to spend holidays or vacations with his natural family or the foster family is caught between wanting both and feeling that either way he will miss something.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Class or small group discussion on one or more topics from A below followed by similar discussions around one or more topics from B.

   A. What should a foster parent do if
   . . . the worker refuses to answer telephone calls from the foster parents.
   . . . refuses to remove a foster child from the home when requested to do so by the foster parents.

. . . fails to process payments for the foster child's board, clothing or medical expenses.
. . . will not share with the foster parent information about the foster child.
. . . removes a foster child from the home without explanation or warning.

B. What should a worker do if a foster parent
. . . refuses to take a child to medical appointments.
. . . refuses to let natural parents visit in home.
. . . uses physical discipline.
. . . uses money from the foster child's bank account.
. . . spends foster care payments for new living room furniture.

2. Thinking about what it was (or would be) like to
. . . lose a loved one.
. . . find yourself among strangers in a foreign country.
. . . visit your child who was in foster care in someone else's home.
. . . being lost as a child.

3. Listing on blackboard the needs of a child under various headings.

4. Devising specific plans for a child
. . . for the first day in your home.
. . . preparing him (her) to leave.
. . . discussing why his mommy didn't come when she said she would.

5. List for each person responsible for the well-being of the foster child (foster parent, worker, natural parent) the particular duties, responsibilities, and rights connected with that position.

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2. "What Foster Parents and Natural Parents Talk About"
3. "Foster Parents' Behavior Toward Natural Parents"
4. "Role Playing: Foster/Natural Parents' Conversation"
5. "How Foster Parents Overcome Negative Feelings"

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HANDLING LYING, DISHONESTY, and DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR

General Objectives

1. To help foster parents interpret the meaning of lying, stealing, and other forms of dishonesty; to help them determine what the consequences of such behavior are for the child; and to help them develop skills in helping children to move to more mature ways of behaving.
2. To help foster parents deal with acting out behavior, especially destructive behavior and temper tantrums; avoid situations that break down control; help the child to develop controls; provide alternative acceptable behaviors; and teach the child how to deal with his feelings.

Specific Goals

1. To differentiate between different types of apparent dishonesty in terms of the child's developmental stage.
2. To clarify their own values around dishonesty.
3. To understand the reasons why children lie.
4. To develop skills to help the child act more honestly.
5. To understand the reasons children are destructive.
6. To clarify their own values and feelings about anger.
7. To develop skills in controlling destructive behavior.
8. To develop skills in helping children handle anger appropriately.

Important Points

Dishonesty:

1. Children lie and steal for different reasons. At some developmental stages they really do not understand the difference between lying and the truth, your property and my property. Some forms of dishonesty are the ways in which children learn, and proper management of dishonest behavior may help the child to move into the next stage of development.
2. Some of the reasons why children are dishonest include:
   a. reality testing: attempting to find out the difference between what is and what they think.
   b. denial: a way of handling painful memories, feelings, fantasies, or behavior to protect themselves from feelings of guilt or inadequacy.
   c. wish fulfillment: a way of making things better.
   d. fantasy: pretending, imagination, or daydreaming.
   e. protection: to escape the consequences of behavior.
   f. modeling: copying the examples set by the adults in his environment.
   g. lack of impulse control: slowness in moving to the next developmental stage.
   h. replacement: children feel unloved and steal to appease their emotional hunger.
   i. need fulfillment: to get things they need or want badly.
   j. recognition: to be part of the gang or enhance reputation.
3. Foster families are upset about lying and stealing because:
   a. their own moral codes are assaulted.
   b. their relationships with the child are disrupted.

c. they are embarrassed with the public, school, neighbors, etc.
d. they worry about the effect on their own children.
e. they worry about the child becoming a criminal or growing up to be an immoral, unethical adult.

4. Lying and cheating are not clearly prohibited in our society. Adults are allowed to bend rules, tell white lies, etc. Why do we expect more of children than we do of adults?

5. Recognizing the stage the child is at developmentally may help alleviate concern and allow the parenting person to use energies more constructively—to help the child to move to the next developmental level. It is important to be aware of what the child is capable of and what his perception of the world is like, to understand his behavior and deal with it effectively (i.e., control the most disruptive behavior and use the situation for growth). Developmental stages are sequential and the person moves from one to another at his own pace and in line with his experiences. No stage can be skipped and thus the child who is at a level below what would be expected must move to the next stage. He cannot be forced to "act his age." (NOTE: Problems with foster children are often either exaggerations of behavior that is typical of a developmental stage or they are developmentally behind what might be regarded as typical of their age.) (See Developmental Chart, *Michigan Foster Parent Association Third Annual Educational Conference*, pp. 31-37.)

6. It is important to be specific about the behavior that is labeled dishonest. Is it really dishonest from the child's point of view? Have we put him into situations that almost force him into dishonesty? (Situations that may be discussed here are: stealing food; fantasy—especially about natural parents; borrowing; lying to avoid punishment; stealing one's own possessions or money; confusion over time—I'll do it in 5 minutes.)

7. The foster parent can do many things to minimize putting a child into situations where he/she will react dishonestly:

   a. Clearly establish property rights in and out of the household with the rights of all (especially the foster child) respected.
   b. Teach how to borrow and return and give help in getting permission and with disappointment at failures to receive permission.
   c. When a child steals, insist on restitution but help with personal support. Provide some method of payment when money is involved, i.e., extra jobs, etc.
   d. Remove temptation, i.e., loose change about, unlocked coin collections, piggy banks, wallets, etc.
   e. Provide a legitimate source of income, i.e., allowance, ways to earn fair distribution of goodies, gifts at Christmas and birthdays.
   f. Listen carefully to children's feelings—is he/she angry, afraid, sad, empty or needy? Help him find more constructive ways of handling these feelings.
   g. Demonstrate your own honesty, setting an example and providing a model.
   h. Do not lie to a child to "protect" him.
   i. Share your honest feelings of anger, embarrassment, and shame when a child makes a mistake, and help him to see the alternatives to his behavior.
   j. When he is wrong, let him understand how he could have been right in the same situation.
   k. Recognize what the child is trying to say and help him say it honestly. I wish. . . . It would have been nice if. . . . I imagined. . .
   l. Review house rules to be sure that the child is not put into positions of lying about behavior that should really be within his own discretion.

8. What to do in the short run?

   a. Assess problem. What is the specific behavior that is troublesome? When does it occur? What situation or interaction triggers behavior? What does it mean to the child? Why does he/she behave this way?
   b. Make a plan. If we remember that our role is to teach children to be able to

make their own moral judgements and control their own behavior, then we can base our plan on helping them to control their behavior rather than depending on outside control. This doesn't mean we shouldn't use outside controls. With young children, or with children of any age who have not developed their own controls, outside controls are necessary.

c. Implementing plan. Child should be told why specific behavior is wrong and the consequences of such behavior in line with his stage of development. The specific wrong behavior should be named and the specific consequences of that repeated behavior should be given.

Destructiveness

1. Anger and aggression are the natural responses to frustration. All human beings experience frustrations as they grow. The infant or small child reacts with rage. We must teach all children appropriate ways to handle rage.

2. Many adults feel anger of any type is deplorable and are especially concerned about children being angry. Foster families also have to deal with the consequences of acting out behavior.

3. Although behavior can be controlled, all feelings, including feelings of anger, are legitimate.

4. Foster children, because of their life experiences, may feel more anger than most other children. The foster family did not cause the anger and it is not their fault, but the foster child may use them as the target of the anger. All behavior has meaning even if it is not always obvious.

5. Children are likely to express their anger through temper tantrums, deliberate destructiveness, or attempting to hurt others. Although we can empathize with their feelings, we cannot let them hurt themselves, others, or destroy property.

6. Children act out their anger in inappropriate ways because they have not developed appropriate controls, because they have not been taught appropriate ways to relieve their feelings, and because they really want adults to provide some control as an expression of their concern.

7. Self-control is closely associated with developmental stages. Recognizing the stage the child is at developmentally may help alleviate concern and allow the parenting person to use energies more constructively—to help the child move to the next developmental level. It is important to be aware of what the child is capable of and what his perception of the world is like, to understand his behavior and deal with it effectively (i.e., control the most disruptive behavior and use the situation for growth). Developmental stages are sequential and the person moves from one to another at his own pace and in line with his experiences. No stage can be skipped and thus the child who is at a level below what would be expected must move to the next stage. He cannot be forced to "act his age." (NOTE: problems with foster children are often either exaggerations of behavior that is typical of a developmental stage or they are developmentally behind what might be regarded as typical of their age.) (See Developmental Chart, *Michigan Foster Parent Association Third Annual Educational Conference*, pp. 31-37.)

8. The goals to be achieved with any child who acts out are:

   a. Immediate control of the behavior to prevent harm to himself, others, or property.
   b. Alleviation of the anger.
   c. Development of self-control and acceptable avenues of expression of feelings.

9. Controls that are extremely punitive only make the child more angry.

10. The best discipline is always the natural consequence of behavior. If you break something, you no longer have it and must pay for it if it belongs to someone else. If you hurt children, you can no longer play with them. (NOTE: Extreme

isolation may make the child more angry. Temporary removal until he/she gains self-control or for a time period appropriate to his age is better.) Obviously, some consequences are too severe to allow.

11. To handle behavior in the short run, the parent first of all assesses the behavior. One should determine if intervention is necessary. Is the child truly destructive or merely careless with his/her possessions? Is he taking out destructive urges on his own personal property or infringing on the rights of others? Does his/her behavior need control or is it only the expression of anger that is disturbing to the foster parent?

12. The parent must determine why the child acts out. What situations trigger acting out behavior and what is the child feeling? The answers to these questions determine the plan.

13. Working on too many problem areas at one time is bound to lead to failure. The parent should determine which specific behavior areas should be tackled first. Priority would probably take the following order:

    a. Stop the child from hurting himself or others.
    b. Stop the child from destroying other's property.
    c. Stop the child from verbal aggression that is assaultive on others. (NOTE: This is different from stopping the child from expressing his feelings which should probably never be done.)
    d. Teaching the child to be careful and respectful of property.

14. Whenever there is a need to control behavior, the parent should use a variation of the following statement: You seem to be angry or unhappy because _____, but I cannot let you (specific behavior). If you (specific behavior), then (specific consequences). Why don't you (alternative behavior). The child must be physically stopped or removed from the situation if he is likely to be dangerous to himself or others.

15. When the child is out of control, reason won't work. Probably the best way to handle a real temper tantrum is to hold the child firmly but lovingly until he/she gains control or is exhausted. An alternative is to place the child in a relatively safe place, e.g., a carpeted bedroom.

16. As a child regains control, he or she may be able to explain feelings or reason behind his actions. This is not always possible. When the child is able to explain, the adult is sometimes surprised. Discussion should be initiated (in a concerned way) around the following points:

    a. recognition and sympathy for the child's feelings,
    b. restatement of specific behavior that cannot be tolerated and why,
    c. specific consequences that will follow unacceptable behavior,
    d. alternative behaviors the child can substitute.
    e. reassurance that the foster parent is concerned about the child, feels he is worthwhile, and is confident that the child will learn more appropriate outlets for his feelings.

17. Alternative behaviors for children:

    a. Pounding a pillow, stuffed animal, plastic blow-up toy, etc.
    b. Throwing balls, snowballs
    c. Hammering, chopping wood
    d. Expressing feelings through painting, drawing, working with clay
    e. "Hurting" or tearing up magazine pictures.

    These behaviors are OK, but many foster parents will find them disturbing unless they have themselves differentiated anger and acting-out behavior.

18. When a situation develops in which a child is losing control, he should be removed. He can be taught to remove himself as he feels control slipping. Going to one's room is often terribly frightening, especially if one's feelings are scarey. A place removed from the family but nearby, such as the stairs, a cor-

ner of the dining room, a big chair is good. Removal time should be dependent on the child's ability to rejoin activities, rather than a specific time period. He can usually tell when he is ready. As children develop controls, they can be encouraged to take time out when control is slipping. Going to watch television is sometimes useful.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Have trainees describe a lie they have told as a child. Can they remember why they told it? How did they feel? Where they found out?
2. Have the group list all of the situations when lying might be the better policy. Can they think of how these situations might be handled sensitively, tactfully, but still honestly?
3. Have each person write a short essay on "What do I do when I get really angry?"
4. Have small groups brainstorm:
   . . . how adults model dishonest behavior
   . . . how adults encourage children to lie
5. Have trainees discuss ways of restraining children of various ages who are having temper tantrums.

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